

JOHANNA CHRISTINE HANDBERG NICOL

Johanna Christine Handberg was born March 11, 1839 in Odense, Fyen, Denmark, the daughter of John Joseph Handberg, born in Copenhagen, Denmark, October 29, 1801, and Marie Christine Trane, born in Bogense, on Fyen, Denmark, June 17, 1807, who was baptized February 2, 1851, came to Utah in September, 1865, and died in 1884. Her father was baptized in 1857 and died on Amage Island in 1865, (a saddlemaker in Denmark). They were humble people, honest and thrifty.

In 1850 Erastus Snow came to their land as a Mormon Missionary and was received with open hearts and minds, the influence of his message was so great people flocked to hear him, and many were converted. Among them were Johanna Christine Handberg and Augusta Dorius. Their conversion was so deep and sincere, they brought Johanna's mother to the meetings with them and she was also converted to the true Gospel. The girls were baptized December 14, 1850. It was night and a hole was chopped through the ice in the river but they did not notice the extreme cold their hearts were so full of joy.

Several companies of Danish saints had gone to Zion before Johanna had saved enough money to pay for the journey. They sailed from Copenhagen on April 18, 1857, on the steamer L. Hirdt in charge of Hector C. Haight, then presiding over the Scandinavian Mission. They crossed directly to Hull, England, were transferred to rail to Liverpool and as a company of 544 saints, sailed on the Westmoreland April 25, arriving in Philadelphia June 2nd after five weeks on the water, where harmony, unity, and good will characteristic of Latter-day Saints had prevailed. Five Danish couples were married aboard ship.

They were met by the Emigration officers, Augus M. Cannon and John Taylor, and advised of their journey west. They reached Iowa City by rail and were taken to a small grove with a clear stream of water four miles west of the city, where hand cart negotiations were begun in preparation for their 1334 mile trek to the goal of their ambitions.

The company consisted of 544 persons, 68 handcarts, 3 wagons, 10 mules, and 1 cow, who soon died. They left Florence, Nebraska, July 3rd, but because of lack of space in the handcarts, had to leave many of their priceless possessions behind. Some thought they would be sent on later, but they never saw them again. After the quiet of the boat and the fine roads of their native lands, they found travel on the prairie, pulling handcarts, almost beyond their endurance, no matter how they harnessed themselves to the task. However, they were a band of converts, confiding, trustful, and hopeful, and they sang and danced in the evening when others would have wept.

They were comforted to know they were in ^{the} care of C. C. A. Christensen, this man they loved from their own country, who gave them courage and good cheer. They had a wagon as a hospital or place of refuge of their own. Three other captains were appointed, Carl C. M. Dorias, Ferdinand Dorius, and O. C. Olsen.

There were four Danish girls in the company, strong, healthy, and happy, and as their equipment was light they were ever serving and aiding those who needed help. Their names were C. Christina Green, Mrs. Laurentzen (Lund), Johanna Christine Handberg, and another whose name I have not found.

Carrolla Larson

They have ever been held in grateful remembrance for their cheerful, loving aid in this trying journey with handcarts across the plains.

The four mule teams pushed on ahead and were a source of annoyance instead of help to the aged and those in poor health. Some could not go on and stayed at stations along the way until a latter date. Among those turned back was a Swede named Halberg. He had a feeble wife and two children and was advised to remain in Florence. This he could not endure, but followed the Company and overtook them after fifty miles of travel. He carried his wife and sometimes the children on the cart which he was able to pull, because of his superior strength and irresistible desire to reach Zion. However, he died before the journey was completed.

The crossing of the Elkhorn and Platte Rivers was dangerous because of quicksand, shifting sand bars and deep holes. Friendly Indians with their horses became guides. It was necessary to raise the boxes of the wagons so as not to damage their supplies. Everyone helped and the strongest men pulled the handcarts while many of the women rode behind the Indian on his horse. In many cases where the children were placed on the handcart, the water was so deep there was barely space to breathe under the cover.

Then again the water famine would become acute. The severe strain of hard work and no water was more than many could endure and at times, when the need was the greatest, they passed near water without knowing it. The Company was made up of all classes so some lacked endurance and fell exhausted by the wayside. The task of the women was greatest, many in delicate condition and all had to feed and care for their families at the end of each day.

While the Saints were pulling their crude handcarts on the north side of the river, the soldiers of the United States (Johnston's Army) was marching along the south side to put down the rebellion in Utah, a rebellion which had no existence except in the minds of those who believed utterly false reports sent out to create enmity toward the Mormon people. Marching against these people, whose religious devotion and self sacrifice were so manifest, must have often appealed to the more intelligent soldiers as both contradictory and absurd. The commissary of the army was ample and all soldiers had an abundance of food, while the Saints were often in dire distress. However, when the foot of one of Uncle Sam's oxen was crushed by a wagon the Captain gave it to the Handcart Pioneers for food. They were so hungry they accepted and divided the meat. While buffalo was plentiful, they had no arms and were afraid of stampedes as well. Flour and supplies were sent to the Company when they reached Devil's Gate.

Hard as the journey was, the people were in better condition than the teams, and they had to help push and pull the wagons on steep inclines. They reached Fort Laramie August 9, 1857, and as they entered the Black Hills suffered much because of scarcity of water. The saints were now very ragged in appearance, having had to leave so much of their clothing behind, but as they were nearer Zion each day they were encouraged and happy knowing better days were ahead.

They have even been told in the past that the river is not navigable for small boats, but this is not the case.

The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places.

The crossing of the river was found to be very difficult. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places.

The crossing of the river was found to be very difficult. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places.

The crossing of the river was found to be very difficult. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places.

The crossing of the river was found to be very difficult. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places. The river was found to be navigable for small boats, but the water was very shallow in places.

On the 13th of September on Sunday, they marched with feelings of thankfulness and with great expectations into the valley of the Saints.

Johanna's friend, Augusta Dorius, had arrived in Utah in 1852, but was glad when the C. C. A. Christensen Handcart arrived to find Johanna was with the company of Danish Saints.

In 1858 the two girls went to live at the home of Thomas Nicol whose wife had died January 23, 1858, and who had a tiny baby left by the mother for him to care for. As the girls had no special home or relatives, they were glad to help the bereft man. Soon Augusta became dissatisfied and decided to leave the Nicol home. So Thomas persuaded Johanna to become his wife and the permanent nurse for the dear baby. They were married March 11, 1858, on Johanna's 19th birthday, by Bishop John Sharp of Salt Lake City and were happy together.

Their first child, Josephine, was born January 25, 1859 in Salt Lake City. Later they moved to Moroni, San Pete County, where Thomas Handberg was born January 20, 1861. Early in the same year they moved to Heber City among the first settlers. In Heber they lived on the west side of the Fort for 34 years. It was while living here that Scarlet Fever and Diphtheria broke out in their family and three of their four children died and were buried in one wide grave. Josephine was the only child left.

Although Johanna was heartbroken, she worked incessantly to save other children in the community. She was a natural nurse, but soon realized her need for training, and desired to take a course in obstetrics then being given by Romania B. Pratt Penrose in Salt Lake City. So great was the need of help, both in nursing and medicine, that Brigham Young appointed Johanna to go to Salt Lake City and take the course as a representative of Wasatch Stake authorities. She studied hard and earnestly and received her diploma.

When she returned to Heber City, her services were in great demand. Everyone now called her Aunt Hannah. She was a woman of great faith and gave confidence to her patients. She knew no fear and drove alone day or night, summer or winter, all over the county. Little medicine was available, so she learned the use and value of herbs, which she gathered from the nearby canyons, cleaned, dried, and stored them for future use. Her oatmeal gruels were considered the "best made" for giving strength and nourishment to new mothers.

Aunt Hannah was for many years the leading midwife of Wasatch County, having 800 births to her credit, and was always proud and happy that she lost only one mother. Her service was a blessing to the community. Her step-daughter, Dora, was an invalid for many years, and every night, even in weather much below zero, she trudged through the snow with a lantern to light her path to care for Dora and make her as comfortable as possible for the night.

Aunt Hannah had a keen sense of humor, and loved to sing and dance and make everyone happy. At one time she had a chance to buy a very lively horse to use on her frequent sick calls, and her husband, who had a very Scotch brogue, declared, "Hi, Hannah, he'll be the death of ye." However, she learned to love the fine animal and sang and talked to him on lonely roads. One night the climax came. She was called to a nearby town, and the snow was fresh and deep, and it was hard to keep on the road so little traveled. The horse made a misstep off the beaten trail, and ~~over~~ went the sleigh and the dear lady, with all her blankets and warm coverlets, was dumped into the deep snow.

The horse was very much scared, and made a wide circle, dragging the sleigh, and started back home. Here her familiar voice came to the rescue. She called him to stop, and all the time she was wading toward him kept reassuring him he was a good fellow, and they would soon be on their way again, and besides he shouldn't leave an old lady to freeze to death. The horse seemed to understand, and waited until the sleigh was righted and they were ready to proceed on their journey.

Meanwhile, Johannah's life as a wife and mother was a busy one. As more children came to bless her home the spinning wheel worked early and late. The wool from the sheep's backs had to be cleaned with home-made soap and lye bleached from wood ashes, all long and tiresome jobs, but neither soap or cloth could be bought, so each housewife made her own, as well as the candles they burned in the evening, their pillows, quilts, carpets, etc.

The men of the community found work and money scarce, but Thomas Nicol, John Turner, and Frank Fraughton, knowing homes must be built for each family, and that plenty of timber and water power was available in Daniel's Canyon, started one of the earliest sawmills to supply the needed lumber, for which men would trade cattle or any supplies they could raise. Each family had a farm on which they grew hay and grain for the oxen and horses, and wheat, potatoes, and other food for their families who lived in a fort made mostly of log houses for many years. The Indians were hungry and troublesome, stealing horses and cattle badly needed by the settlers.

Thomas also quarried sandstone, first in Red Butte Canyon where it was abundant and freely used for foundation construction, and later used for homes in the Fort Douglas area. Thomas and Johannah had eleven children, only four living to maturity. Rachel, one of their beautiful daughters, died at the age of 16 years. He later married Johanne Kirsten Jensen, a young convert from Denmark, who passed away at the birth of her daughter, Dora Elizabeth, September 29, 1865. This left another little one to be loved and mothered as she was as delicate as she was lovely. Besides raising her own family, and helping in so many other homes, she was counselor to Sister Ellen Lee in the Primary for many years, and had a wonderful influence on the children.

One of her greatest delights was to go to Salt Lake City to a Handcart Reunion, or a gathering of Danish Saints. Augusta Dorius was a lifetime friend, and they visited each other often. Augusta also had a sense of humor, and one day when a well-meaning, but tactless friend told her it was too bad she only had one eye, she quickly answered, "Don't feel sorry for me, I've seen more with one ~~eye~~ than I could get."

Everyone loved Aunt Hannah. She was always kind and helpful, generous and self-sacrificing, and could always see the silver lining of the darkest cloud.

She was a widow for ten years, her husband having died December 23, 1909. She passed away December 14, 1919 at the home of her daughter, Mrs. Heber G. Crook, whose family gave her most wonderful care during the last years of her life.

